



DERBYSHIRE CAVING ASSOCIATION

Open Council Meeting, 16 November 2019, Officers' Reports

6.1. DCA Chairman's Report

As Pete mentioned in the project officer report below, himself, Nige and Adam have been covering access and conservation issue if and when they arise. I have been covering the secretary role, as well as picking up individual access issues where necessary. Thanks to Pete Knight for posting on Facebook and UK Caving, responding to queries via these routes. We do need volunteers to take on these essential roles, but I have drawn a blank in find willing and able volunteers.

Holme Bank Chert Mine – I had a site meeting with Chatsworth to discuss the issues we are experiencing with the locks being cut off at the quarry entrance. They are more than happy for us to adapt the gate to make it so it can be opened from the inside, but the locking mechanism protected so it cannot be cut off from the outside. They are willing to joint fund it as long as the cost is reasonable. Scott and Pete will be dealing with this as a project in the future.

Action lists:

27 – Jenny has a couple of volunteers going through the surveys at BCL, and cataloguing them. This is a long process, once this is done, we will decide the ones that need scanning and get the relevant copyright permissions to put them online. More volunteers are required.

59 – I have spoken to a few local cavers in the area who have said that the landowner is obviously not interested in opening dialogue with us about access. BMC climbers have been carrying on climbing there with no reported issues throughout the climbing season and the landowner isn't stopping them, they supposedly have an access arrangement in place. DCA will keep working on this in the background.

60 – Adam Russell was going to contact the relevant landowner regarding Gentlewoman's Shaft, but he is carrying an injury at the moment that is limiting its availability.

BCA Meeting – I attended the recent BCA Council meeting as an observer, alongside Jenny who votes on DCA's behalf. I personally thought it was a good meeting, very positive with council members having the best interests of BCA in their minds.

Wayne Sheldon
30/10/2019

6.2.a. DCA Secretary Report

I have been dealing with day to day enquires that come into DCA emails, responding or forwarding onto relevant officers where required.

Mike has been emailing out correspondence to members, clubs on my behalf as well as keeping the membership database up to date.

Wayne Sheldon
30/10/2019

6.2.b. Membership Secretary Report:

Individual membership of DCA currently stands at 37 members plus 2 honorary members. Since the start of the year 3 individual members have resigned and 2 others have not renewed their subscription for 2019 despite reminders and who in accordance with paragraph 4.5 of the Constitution are deemed to have resigned. 2 new members have joined.

Associate members are static at 8 and club members have increased by 1 to 33.

Over the last 5 months I have circulated information to members on various issues, including the Agenda for this meeting, the availability of the BCA annual report, the forthcoming BCA ballot, the DCA's projects at Wardlow Sough and Snelslow Swallet, Speedwell Boulder Piles and the availability of BCA's Newsletter no 36.

Since the last DCA Meeting on 1st June I have scanned 10 issues of The Derbyshire Caver and these have been uploaded to the website by Angus.

Mike Higgins
31/10/2019

6.3.a. Treasurer / Webmaster Report

The income and expenditure to date attached. Current balance in Lloyds Account is £23,273.09.

Alan Brentnall and Pete Knight are now signatories of the Lloyds account. Jenny Potts has been removed as a signatory.

Actions:

65: Topo symbols: I have revised anchor symbols for topos, and have created an Inkscape template topo for future use, including symbols. I will distribute this when this is in a more usable form. Existing topos will be revised as time allows.

Topos have been drawn for Longcliffe Mine and Snelslow Swallet, to be made available when access is finalised. Thanks to Phil and Pete for their patience with the editing process.

DCA Webmaster Report:

The main DCA web site has been modified to make it more mobile device friendly. We have received more entrance photographs which have been made available.

I have renewed the peakdistrictcaving.info domain, and will at a later date transfer the registration of this domain to the BCA for security of ownership. The thedca.org.uk domain expires in early 2020, we need to transfer this domains ownership as soon as possible.

Angus Sawyer
01/11/2019

**Derbyshire Caving Association Profit & Loss For Period Covering
01/01/2019 to 31/10/2019**

Revenues		Expenses	
Income		Expenses	
Other	£5.80	General Admin	
Subscriptions & Entry Fees	£340.00	Materials, printing, copying etc	£138.55
Publications		Conservation, Access etc.	
CoPD	£575.00	Travel	£165.49
Conservation Audits & Reports	£55.20	Other	£305.15
News Letters	£108.80	Equipment	
Donations		Travel	£19.80
General Fund	£23.00	Materials	£296.18
BCA Grants		Publications	
Core Funding	£791.60	Newsletter	£72.50
Training	£750.00	Website	£19.19
SSSI work		Training	
Natural England 2018/2019	£200.00	Training events, Instruction etc.	£750.00
Natural England 2019/2020	£2281.90	SSSI Conservation Work	
Caver Training	£60.00	Projects 2018/2019	£49.42
		Projects 2019/2020	£1206.87
Total Revenue	£5191.30	Total Expenses	£3023.15
		Net income for Period	£2168.15

6.3.b. DCA Publications Sales for 1 June to 31 Oct 2019

Caves of the Peak District

During the past 5 months we have sold 21 copies of Caves of the Peak District, 20 at the Trade Price of £13 and one at the full price of £20, total £280. A further 10 are out on sale-or return.

Conservation Audits

We have sold one copy of the Jug Holes Cave Conservation Audit at £4.20, printed at cost by myself. I intend to ask Angus to put all the Audits on the website now as downloadable pdfs with the option of paying for a printed copy if required. I have now worked out costs of printing and posting all 5 C.C.A.s so we can state a price on the website.

The "Derbyshire Caver"

There has been no issue of The Derbyshire Caver since 1st. June so I have not collected the sales takings from the previous issue, No. 151.

Sale of Cave Surveys

On 1st. October I paid in a cheque for £38.00 for the sale of Peak/Speedwell and Giants/Oxlow surveys. We had in the British Caving Library the copies John Beck had printed for DCA to sell to H'n'H, which were never sold because H'n'H folded, so I took 10 of each to Hidden Earth and put them on the Lucky Dip stand along with duplicate publications from the Library. All 10 Peak/Speedwell went and 9 of the 10 Giants/Oxlow so I've allocated £2.00 each from the takings to pass to DCA.

Jenny Potts
29/10/19

6.4.a. Conservation Officer Report

See chairman and project officer reports

6.4.b Underground Conservation Forum Meeting 30/10/19

The meeting was rescheduled from the beginning of the month due to me being incapacitated.

Future Natural England funding was not discussed as Dan Abrahams did not attend or send any report.

The access agreement for Longcliffe and Odin is close to being formalised, the National Trust have had the sites inspected by Les Riley and he has made a number of recommendations for works to be done. Longcliffe will need some form of guiding system so that sensitive areas are not damaged, but the current suggestion is that representatives of local caving clubs are trained up to fulfil this function for their own clubs, and keys will be kept at the Chapel. Rebolting will be needed in Odin, and the risk assessment published online with advice to keep to the inspected route, BCA insurance cover will be required for access.

Tim Allen of Historic England was present, and Eldon Hole was discussed at some length. His opinion is that the strata that the Buttered Badgers dig broke into are of national importance due to the presence of Iron Age human remains and he has put the site forward to become a scheduled monument. He is not willing to permit any further digging unless this can demonstrably show how the deposits came into their present state, which in practice would likely require careful excavation of the entire fill of Eldon Hole.

Wardlow Sough and Snelslow Swallet discussed but these will presumably be covered in the Project Officer's report, likewise the slumping at Devonshire and the planned work at Waterways Swallet.

The graffiti found by Masson CG members covering the "Land of Dope and Story" slab in Cumberland was successfully removed by myself; a write-up will be published in the next DCA newsletter while a more detailed discussion of the methodology is intended for publication in Cave and Karst Science.

Natural England purchased the land at the head of Lathkill Dale which contains Cascade Cavern, they have concerns about the present shaft cap so work is likely to be required here next year.

Adam Russell
02/11/2019

6.5. Access Officer Report

Position vacant but report received from Phil Wolstenholme about some access related issues. These might be duplicated in the UCF report.

National Trust Meeting (Action 64)

A meeting was held on 4th June 2019 between me, Adam Russell, Paul Mortimer and Matt North at the NT's Dark Peak Office to discuss actions and access proposals for both Longcliffe and Odin mines. As a result of that meeting, me and Adam drew up a conservation plan for Longcliffe and Son of Longcliffe, which has been accepted by the NT, and I also drew up a risk assessment to cover typical use of the sites by cavers and mine explorers, which is far as I know has been sent to the NT's risk management team for assessment. The NT wish to have some control measures in place for access to both Longcliffe and SoL, and several options are under discussion, but for certain will involve a lock and key system and some sort of guiding in place, subsequent to further discussions on practicality, liability etc. The meeting also authorised inspections by Les Riley, and a subsequent report from him – useful info generated from both these inspections is detailed below.

Longcliffe Mine Update

On 24th June 2019 I accompanied Les Riley on an inspection visit to Longcliffe Mine on behalf of the National Trust. Les is a qualified mine inspector, and his job was to assess the general condition of the site (from a caving perspective, not a commercial mine) and make any recommendations necessary to improve the stability/robustness of any structural features. I

outlined planned works ready to go, and he only made one further recommendation, which was added to the list. Overall, he was impressed with the work already done, and didn't see any issues that might prevent it being used by competent visitors in the future.

Much repair and stabilisation work has subsequently been completed – two substantial retaining 'steps' were constructed on the miners' staircase immediately below the shaft base, using scaffold tubes, stone and concrete, to ensure that no slippage can occur and undermine the drystone structure built on top of this. Nevertheless, this area should still be passed with great care, as it is impossible to guarantee all of the structure without covering the entire volume in rock mesh and concrete, which would be technically a nightmare and would ruin the extant archaeology. On 27th October, a large team installed a panel of rock mesh over the drystone wall high in the entrance shaft and added two scaffold tube stemples to help retain any future slippage that could occur. This will be concreted in shortly and thus completes the major repairs on our list. At the same time the rigid ladders were stripped from the shaft, all materials were removed from the shaft base and the tripod on surface was dismantled and removed to be used on the Snelslow Swallet job.

The Longcliffe shaft grille has now been fitted with a gas-strut to help opening and closing the heavy access hatch. Some adjustment needs to be made to the pressure to make it balanced in both directions, but it's a great addition to the suite of facilities! We also have a spare should it be damaged or fail due to weather exposure.

Odin Mine Update

In the same week as the Longcliffe inspection, Pete Knight and me also accompanied Les Riley on an inspection visit to Odin mine, in readiness for a re-opening to caver parties (subject to certain conditions). Surprisingly Les had never been before, and so it was an interesting experience for him, amid some bafflement that people actually enjoyed visiting it! But he inspected the 2010 collapse and agreed that with adequate protection using ropes and anchors, it didn't present a serious hazard to suitably equipped and competent visitors. However, the 'handline climb' immediately above this hole is now a significant hazard, owing to the hole beneath, the slipperiness of the route, and the numerous awkward doglegs in the climb which create numerous rub-points on the way up. In addition, it's a tiring climb from all the reasons above and therefore risky. It was decided that additional P-anchors should be installed at the head of this pitch and that it be re-classified as an SRT-only pitch from now on. Obviously, this will require fixed ropes being installed, as a pull-through system isn't practical due to obstructions, but it's the only safe way to deal with this problem.

Additionally, only a single P-anchor is present at the head of the 'Chippendale Rift', and therefore at least one additional anchor should be installed here to create a Y-hang, as this pitch is deep enough to kill should the single anchor fail. Given we can't trace the original installation of this anchor it probably should be pull-tested before installing a new one alongside. As the NT are only going to recommend the traditional 'tourist route' be followed by visiting parties (i.e. to the cartgate blockage and back), it would make sense to do a full anchor inspection trip beforehand and check all the installed anchors on that route, which

includes anchors into the 'Bell Chamber' accessed via the crosscut in the Cartgate walling near the termination.

All other routes in the site are 'not recommended' for use by the NT due to uncertainty of the stability of the workings, but I would like to propose a re-inspection of these areas if possible to make an assessment on the conditions and thus make some recommendation on future use. Additionally, other blocked entrances that might be potentially usable need checking, and at the UCF meeting on 30th October, the NT indicated that they would be interested in receiving more information on this, so I would propose that an inspection be arranged ASAP.

As the NT recently removed the tree trunk in Odin Gorge to prevent non-cavers climbing up to the entrance, it is now just as difficult for cavers to climb up. I would like to propose the installation of three P-anchors at this point to allow cavers to climb this safely using cowstails. The only restriction on this is that the lower part of the gorge is currently fenced-off owing to a collapse on surface high above, and this has yet to be resolved. This can be bypassed via the Widower's Vein approach path, but the only other route available to avoid this is the traditional 'high-level' route from the shale path. However, only one anchor is present here, and it is below the caver's feet on the approach for rigging, and possibly installed in shale too – neither characteristic is reassuring, so we need a better solution for safe access here if access is to be restored. The NT have also requested that we install a warning sign at the entrance to deter determined non-cavers who have reached the spot.

Historic England have informed me that they will not object to further resin anchors being installed, subject to completion of their required scheduling consents, which I will download. The National Trust will also give their permission as landowner for the work to be done.

6.6. Project Officer Report

Since my last report to council, I have been working with Nige Atkins and Adam Russell to cover the roles currently vacant at DCA (Access & Conservation). Between us we have managed to keep everything moving but the Association would greatly benefit from filling these roles, even with a co-opted member, as soon as possible. I continue to administer the new Ashford Black Marble Mine access system and it is being used without problem.

Mandale Mine

Revisiting the mine over the summer, all entrances were secure and undamaged following reinstatement of the Derbyshire Key systems and installation of small plastic notices. Unfortunately, one of the notices had been damaged and will need replacement.

Wardlow Sough

By far the largest job of the year and my tenure as PO. Instead of repeating the details here, I have also included a copy of the report that I produced for Historic England. I have prepared a version for publication by DCA, PDMHS, Descent and TSG. DCA getting the major version and priority of course.

Thanks again to everyone who got involved in this job in whatever capacity. A year of planning, 1 car accident and a week of sweat have given us a new mine and reinforced our reputation with Natural England.

Snelslow Swallet

I am on standby to assist with the arrangement of a clear up event prior to the announcement of open access returning. This will require a tripod, hauling gear and a large team for up to 2 days.

Devonshire Mine

The gate entrance to the mine is starting to slump and requires remedial work. Prior to this report being written I have requested (by email) approval for DCA to initiate and fund repairs here, which I have not received any objections to. I hope to have further information before the DCA meeting, or even to have completed the job.

Ashford Black Marble Mine

There have been some trees brought down by storms which impact on the access along the track. Additionally, there is a large branch located just above the entrance which could pose a risk. Peak Park have been contacted through PICA and should address the issue swiftly.

Mandale Mine

The gate entrance to the mine continues to wobble unnervingly. Reports thought PICA are common. I hope to arrange some time to head over there and sort this out once and for all. I will update the meeting on any progress I have made.

Action Register Items

- 32 – Ongoing.
- 36 – On Hold / Discharged.
- 45 – Purchased and I will bring to the meeting to pass to Bob.
- 48 – No new options yet.
- 53 – No offers as yet.
- 63 – Completed.

Pete Knight

30/11/2019

6.7.A. Equipment Officer Report

Only an “interim” report from me, as you know I’ve been shadowing Bob and learning how it all works since we last all met, and pleased to say it’s all going relatively well.

This year we’ve bolted Longcliffe effectively to completion, Lathkill Dale and have a number of other jobs in the pipeline. Waterways Swallet will be bolted at the working party on the 30th November and plans are afoot I believe for Odin. We’ve had a few formal requests for repairs or rebolting, including some in Peak Cavern and some fixed rope in Eldon - albeit “out of scope” we probably see to it where appropriate.

Waterways Swallet plans have progressed well, there's a lovey new gate, a stack of bolts and some field drainage ready to be installed. It'll be some tough work on the day but should really tidy up the whole site to a great standard - a nice little DCA project!

There is nothing else major to report at this stage, I'm still in the handover phase with Bob and before Christmas I hope to meet again to go through the spreadsheets and hardware and sort the last little bits, which shouldn't be an issue!

Scott Bradley
06/11/2019

6.7.B. Cave Atmosphere Monitoring Report.

1. Problems reported. Again, no problems of high CO₂ have been reported, which, under the circumstance, is a relief. Luckily, DCA could fall back on DCRO facilities, should any problems have arisen.

2019 has been a very good year for cave atmospheres in the Peak District - compared to Mendip, we are indeed fortunate.

2. Measurements. It has not been possible to take any measurements during this period.

3. Equipment. As reported in the minutes of the last meeting, the PS500 was badly water-damaged in an incident at Coalpit Rake No.10 near Sparrowpit in May. First attempts at drying and recovering the meter failed, and it was thought that it may need to be replaced (at considerable cost). However, a friend of John Gunn's managed to strip down the meter, clean and dry all parts and rebuild it successfully, and it appears to now work effectively.

Because of the high cost of this kit, I have decided that it, in future, it shouldn't be lent to other groups, but, when this is absolutely necessary, it needs to be accompanied by and used by a DCA officer who understands the problems and can take the correct precautions.

Often the purpose of these "borrowings" is for safety rather than for analysis and recording of gas strength; indeed, I have rarely, if ever, received recorded values when I have lent out equipment in the past, and, if this is the case, then a simple single-gas, disposable oxygen monitor should suffice, and these can be purchased for less than £100.

Alan Brentnall
11/10/2019

6.8. Training Officer Report.

BCA Training calendar not included. This will be handed out at the meeting.

6.9. Newsletter Editor

The July edition of The Derbyshire Caver sadly didn't materialise due to a lack of significant content. As print costs don't vary, it was considered a waste of money and paper to essentially produce a 'filler' edition, and so what little content there was has been saved for a November release, which at the time of writing is going to be packed with interesting content, with more conservation-related articles, some interesting exploration reports on Peak Cavern digging and a brief history of the early days of Giants Hole exploration.

Phil Wolstenholme
31/10/2019

6.10. Cave Registry Secretary

DCRO were recently contacted by the police requesting a spreadsheet version of the cave registry they could use for search-and-rescue location finding, and Angus provided them with the data in a format they could use. Many thanks to Jenny Drake for coordinating that. I've had very few submissions of new information to the registry since the last meeting, but a few tweaks to existing entries have been made and the status of Wardlow Sough has been updated to reflect the recent rebuild and re-opening. Cavers are also still sending in entrance photos, which is appreciated.

Phil Wolstenholme
31/10/2019

7.1. BCA Matters

Report on BCA AGM 9 June and Council Meeting 13 October 2019

Firstly, I should point out that these are my own views on the two BCA Meetings - if you want to know more, you should read the Minutes online on the BCA website; the AGM Minutes are already posted together with the Council Minutes for 9 June; the Council Minutes for 13 October will be posted shortly. Wayne Sheldon was also present at both meetings and may well have his own comments to make.

BCA AGM 9, June, Horton in Ribblesdale Village Hall

Unfortunately, the hall was rather cramped for the number of people at the best attended BCA AGM ever and there were initially some problems signing in group representatives as Standing Orders had never been updated to allow for clubs which no longer have headed notepaper. The problem was eventually resolved, and the new BCA Secretary has the matter in hand to ensure that this will not be a problem in future.

The Acting Secretary, Robin Weare, gave a somewhat defensive report, clearly feeling that he has done his best in a difficult position, having been landed in a job he did not want. The CSCC rep. complained that BCA was exceeding its remit in taking Charterhouse Caving Committee to task over their access arrangements not allowing under-18s; this problem has yet to be resolved and the BCA Secretary has received some legal advice on this.

Insurance Manager Howard Jones gave a detailed report on the BCA insurance situation and confirmed that the BCA Expedition Insurance is now live and available. He asked members for guidance on the possibility of setting up a personal accident insurance for members at no extra cost - this will be dealt with at the October Council Meeting.

Chairman, Les Williams; Secretary, Matt Ewles; and Treasurer, Howard Jones were elected unopposed. Jane Allen was elected as Publications and Information Officer but with no Standing Committee. Training Officer is Nigel Atkins; Conservation & Access Officer is Louise Baddeley. Problems again became apparent with Individual Member nominations due to the failure to update the nominations procedure to take account of online communication. Eventually, after various disagreements, Will Burn and Phil Rowsell were elected as Individual Member reps. for a 2-year term, joining Andrew McLeod who remains in post until 2020. The two Group reps. elected were Hellie Adams and Gary Douthwaite to serve for two years until 2021, joining Idris Williams and John Hine (already in post, ending 2020).

The AGM elected Gary Douthwaite to the Position of Webmaster - a post which had formerly been an appointment of Council - and an extremely detailed Appendix 7 set out what he required in the way of accesses and mandates in order to allow him to redevelop the website.

The lengthy set of proposals affecting the BCA Constitution (including the abolition of the "two house" voting system) were passed by the requisite 70% majority in both "houses" and are now subject to a ballot of individual Members, due to take place before 30th. November.

Note: The Council Meeting immediately following the AGM appointed Dave Cooke (formerly the webmaster) as the Convenor of the IT Working Group.

BCA Council Meeting 13 October 2019, held at Spanset Offices in Middlewich

A number of Council Members had agreed among themselves prior to this meeting that we did not want a repeat of the fractious and unpleasant atmosphere which had been so obvious at the AGM. The feeling seemed to be general so, although there were disagreements, it was a far more civilised meeting and most of us felt that good progress had been made. This was a lengthy meeting with a great deal of business dealt with - mostly with everyone's agreement.

Some of the particular issues raised were:

- CSCC were very unhappy at the idea of the Conservation & Access Committee (rather than the Finance Committee) dealing with regional access expenditure, feeling it would be an attempt to control CSCC's spending. The Treasurer had already said that BCA would cover all regional expenditure and CSCC were assured that the intention was to make things easier for them to claim for items they had not previously considered.
- The Webmaster complained that he had not been given full and exclusive access to the BCA membership records, as he had requested when taking up his post. After lengthy discussion it was agreed that this matter might best be dealt with by the IT Working Party since there were believed to be issues with the Data Protection

Legislation and the current BCA Membership system dealt with some constituent bodies and other groups in addition to just BCA.

- After some lengthy discussion on the cost of Individual Membership and the view of the Treasurer that BCA had accumulated a considerable funds it was not making use of, it was agreed to reduce the cost of DIM membership to match that of CIM membership for 2020. (Note that this has had unforeseen consequences for membership of BCRA, which requires its members to be BCA DIMs.)
- The proposal for a BCA Personal Accident Insurance was shelved as there were felt to be previously unforeseen problems with this initiative.
- The proposal for increased funding for the British Caving Library was passed - this will allow the appointment of a part-time clerical assistant.
- The request for funding to support BCRA in its work on cave science was put back, pending further information from BCRA.
- C&A Officer, Louise Baddeley, has unfortunately had to resign so a new person is being sought to take on the post. 2

Jenny Potts, DCA Rep.

05/11/2019

BCA AGM in 2021:

The BCA AGM moves around the regions on a north / south basis, this has been held in the Peak District a few times already. In 2020, it's being held in Priddy, hosted by the Council of Southern Caving Clubs (CSCC). In 2021 it is scheduled to be in the Peak District and DCA will need to host it. What do Officers think: do we think we could arrange a weekend of caving events including an AGM?

Wayne Sheldon

DCA Chairman